Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs
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Ministers Congratulate Natuashish Graduates

The landmark accomplishments of two Mushuau Innu were recognized Thursday evening. Shekau Piwas and Desiree Andrew became the first Natuashish students to graduate from high school. It has been 12 years since a Mushuau Innu has received a high school diploma. Natuashish was founded in 2002 when residents relocated from Davis Inlet.

"It was a great honour to be present when residents of Natuashish came together to celebrate the great achievement of Shekau and Desiree," said the Honourable Patty Pottle, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, who delivered an address during the graduation ceremony. "I am sure the success of these Natuashish graduates of 2008 will inspire further success among the youth of this community."

"All of Natuashish can share in the accomplishments of Shekau Piwas and Desiree Andrew," said the Honourable John Hickey, Minister of Labrador Affairs. "The entire community is to be congratulated on the success of these two young people, who, through this accomplishment and their volunteer work in the community, are serving as role models."

Minister Pottle noted that Mushuau Innu Natuashish School has enjoyed a number of successful initiatives in the past school year, including work undertaken at the school level to ensure Innu culture is reflected in the curriculum. A course called Natshiniu Aitum (Outdoor Living), taught at the high school level, is helping Innu youth learn the ways of their ancestors, how they lived off the land, and demonstrated respect for the environment that sustained them.

"As we celebrate this graduation, we must also recognize other successful efforts by educators and the community that have contributed to this great achievement," said Minister Pottle.

"I note the exchange program with students of Fergus, Ontario, which was a tremendous example of how the entire community reached out to welcome students from Ontario and provide them with a week of immersion into Innu culture," said Minister Pottle. "This invaluable exchange also provided the youth of Natuashish to become immersed in an Ontario community and represent their school and their community in a very mature and positive way."

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